

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the application are respectfully requested in view of the remarks herewith. The present response is submitted to facilitate prosecution of the application.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Claims 1-21 are pending. No claims have been amended.

II. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-8, 9, 13, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,583,560 to Florin et al. (hereinafter, merely "Florin") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,496,228 to McGee et al. (hereinafter, merely "McGee") and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,804,825 to White et al. (hereinafter, merely "White").

Claims 10-12, 14, 15-17, and 19-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Florin in view of McGee and White, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,977,974 to Hatori et al. (hereinafter, merely "Hatori").

Applicants respectfully submit that White is not prior art under any of the subsections of 35 U.S.C. §102, as required in a proper rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). White is entitled to an earliest priority of November 30, 1998. However, the present application is entitled to foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(a) of November 30, 1998, based on an application filed in Japan. The necessary claim for foreign priority, along with a certified copy of the priority document, were received at the USPTO with the original §371 filing. A verified English translation of the priority document is included with this response.

Therefore, since White is not prior art, all of the outstanding rejection based on White are overcome. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-21 are patentable.

CONCLUSION

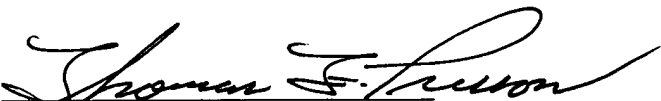
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Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims are in condition for allowance and request early passage to issue of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

FROMMER LAWRENCE & HAUG LLP
Attorneys for Applicants

By



Thomas F. Presson
Reg. No. 41,442
(212) 588-0800